"The administrative functionaries and the judges are appointed by the king, subject to the approval of the Siamese Commissioner. Justice is administered according to the traditions of what was known in the early ages as 'the judgments of God.' That is to say the oath is taken upon a silver cup or a sword, and holy water is given the accused to drink, and if the accused person has wrongly declared himself innocent the water will poison him or the sword will be thrust through him by a spirit, at night. It need hardly be said that the judges are not satisfied with this test, that is to say, they take care to inform themselves before the trial as to the fortune of the prisoner, and it is said that they are easily influenced by bribes.

The punishments comprise fines, the bastonade, penal servitude, and being put in chains, but torture is not practised."

648* King Souligna, who was unquestionably a great king, was
175* to succeed in postponing for a century.

SOULIGNA-VONGSA (1613), KING 1637-1694.

643* At this time the documents regain some degree of precision and
175* mention a violent struggle for the throne between the three sons of Tone-Kham, namely Somphou, Boun-Sou and Souligna-Koumane, on the one hand, and on the other hand the two sons of Visai, Tiao-Bou and Tiao-Soy.

We may safely believe that it was, by some chance, the best of them who finally gained the upper hand. This was Souligna-Koumane, who was to reign undisputed /103/ under the name of Souligna-Vongsa for fifty-seven years (1).

1. Tiao-Bou entered into orders. Tiao-Soy and Boun-Sou died shortly after Souligna's accession to the throne. As for Somphou, the eldest of them all, he took refuge in Hue where the emperor of Annam took him in. During his exile his wife gave birth to a son who was named Sai-Ong-Hue. After his death his wife remarried, this time one of his early comrades named Sene-Thip, by whom she had another son, Thao-Nong. These two children were to play one of the foremost roles in the history of Lan-Xang at the beginning of the eighteenth century. (See p. 131 ff.)

Authoritarian and intransigent, but just and loyal, this prince soon inspired a respectful fear in the whole court and gained the affection of his people by his administration which was at once severe, prudent /681/ and sage. He repressed piracy without mercy, punished robbery and adultery rigorously by death and was thereby able to restore absolute tranquillity to his kingdom within a few years.

648* Abroad, he kept on peaceful terms with all his neighbors. Lan-
643* Xang had regained the stature of a powerful State against which any
175* war would have involved too many risks to be ventured. Strong garrisons defended the passes on the north and east and were a sufficient guarantee against any invasionary whims. Thus the only incidents of this long reign were those involving delimitations of the frontiers, if we except a few short expeditions into Tran-Ninh /104/ "for the beautiful eyes of a new Helen" (1).

1. Cf. Captain de Pelacot, "Le Tran-Ninh historique." (Revue indochinoise, 1906.)